

## GOD AND HIS IMMORTALS.

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### AHURA.

AHURA, the life-Spirit-Lord, existed as a word in its form of Asura from immemorial ages in the common primeval home of Veda and Avesta; and no name could be nobler for a holy God. It is better than Deus,—Zeus, which referred to the shining sky; better than “God,” far *better* in its origin at least; for, curiously enough, it expressed the same supervening ideas that we have in the Hebrew Yahveh which was later thought to mean “the being One,” the “I am that I am.”<sup>1</sup> This is the very same concept which lives essentially and etymologically in Ahura; for He is the source and interior of being, *Ahu-ra*; and, so far as I can remember, this is the deepest epithet that has ever been prominently applied to Deity. With this we have the other name Mazda, “the Great Creater,” or with tradition the “Great Wise One.” No words could be more impressive nor more interpenetrating.<sup>2</sup>

### THE AMESHA SPENTA.

While the six characteristics—virtues would not be the proper word—are absolutely the main laws of a righteous universe, clear and pure. Simple indeed they are, as all things universal must be;—common too, as the breath-air that we breathe, for life is common; they are the most interior and elevating forces in all that we really know, or so to us they should be. Here they are in a sense collected; and in them all that is fittest for expression speaks to us. Not of themselves only do they thus impel us, once merely uttered, and then left wandering, scattered as it were amidst an innumerable host of other similarly treasured spiritual things. Gems of imperishable cost they would be, or they are, even then as so dispersed.

<sup>1</sup> An unquestionably later interpolation of Exilic origin.

<sup>2</sup> Nor have any more impressively effective appeared in history.

and so existing to us, though almost irretrievably hidden amidst the throngs of other beauty from our most eager sight. And so indeed they actually once lay strewn like jewels of first water all dull and unpolished and rarely recognized in the bed-rock of their unwrought mines or buried in their native clay;—vague surmises were they ever even then of the eternal way in which the beneficial powers sometimes work for us for good. But here, as seen, they are gathered up for us; not like the glittering objects in a diadem,—that would be *indeed* too low an image,—not like the flowers upon a full-flushed tree, but like the solar systems around their central orb. Like this these all-pervading order-forces revolve around the throne of their Great Sovereign;—nay more, they actuate the very Person of the God Omnipotent,—in honor—they are not His decorations; far from it,—God forbid. They are His very Nature. He is the self-dividing, all enclosing Prism of them all,—the One of glorious hues that fold and unfold themselves in everlasting light. They are in a word God's character, than which no further thought is thinkable. And as the eternal ideals of all truth and order, they are those essential conditions of well-being, toward which all sentient subjects spiritually gravitate and should forever yearn;—and they are here enthroned,—made dominant,—set over everything in a way pre-eminent, though they have indeed evolved themselves through long preceding ages, nay rather, though they have gathered crystal-like in their clusters through previous cycling æons.

#### ASHA.

Asha, the very first law of all our better consciousness, here even seriously gains in its application, marvelous as such a thing may seem to some of us to be.

It, Asha, is indeed itself and in itself, Heaven's and nature's first moral guide, here declared also to be the first principle of God's eternal being. It is lifted up by all that there is in the conception of the divine personality,—brought into operation,—becoming at once when established among the Six a mighty challenging idea flinging its defiance at that one gigantic, but malign element, its opposite, the Lie, a spirit demon which withers us on every side. It proclaimed the Truth in the post-ultimate meaning of the word, asserting that there was indeed such a thing as a law actual,—and this not as a pointless sentiment, feebly fluttering, but as the very first instinct of God's character. From eternity past it has been the same, so in the vital present, and to all coming futurity will it abide unchangeable.

If we, who struggle to maintain honor, believe God to be indeed a person, here is a support immeasurable for us. The great crucified but risen Christ of faith cheers all our efforts on, for it has an almighty mind to harbor it and to guard it, to assist it, and proclaim it in the very ultimate essence of its worth;—for of such a mind is it indeed an all-controlling, dominant, though merely regulative part.

What a consolation indeed for those who think Truth possible and who believe in God in any sense of Him;—to think that there is at least one person who is True,—and *such a Person!* And we see how beautifully such a creed applies itself. Here we have a God omnipotent to protect us, and to further us, and to bless us;—but He consists, in part at least, of fidelity; and we have no connection with Him save as we are faithful. Abandon honor and He vanishes. There is no God but the *true God, the Asha-God.*

But like all things of its nature the growth of this great but simple principle, in its recognition of course I mean, was, as I say, but gradual.

It developed at first slowly enough indeed, as we may both most readily conjecture and concede, with languid signs of life as its first glimmer shone among the vague dreams of sentient beings, glowing feebly into fuller light. And elsewhere and aside from either, it seems to have been in fact the very last and most remote of all the ideas to be recognized as centered and so elevated in the forms of ancient creeds, as at all in any way a particular trait of any one of all the beings called “divine,” not even of the chief of them, so luxuriantly depicted as they are in the wreaths of our immortal song.

Even in the pre-Gāthic age it, Asha of the Holy Truth, was of course surmised dimly as a universal regulative power;—but only by degrees did it unfold itself into clear consciousness as it grew, as all things like it must. That is to say, the very first idea of it as a concept developed but tardily as our race rose from its animal predecessors.—Some sort of consecutive sequence may indeed have even revealed itself to the instincts of the higher animals; the next beneath us; but it is better to confine ourselves to man.

The observed regularity in the sequence of natural phenomena first riveted attention as we grew human;—especially the heavenly bodies seemed to follow some rule, chief of all and naturally the God-like sun, which was often seen quite unclouded for long periods in lands called Iran. Its august reappearances followed Law even in its supervening changes in situation and intensity, with occasional

eclipse. It never failed, and on its fidelity the balance of all existing necessary objects seemed to hang. Without one phase of it planting would be impossible, without another harvest, without a third the source of tonic health.

Soon the moon, its brother luminary, for the moon is masculine both in Veda and Avesta, took up the tale with his five changes, and with these the reverting atmospheric modifications seemed to harmonize.

The main features of the advancing year-time seemed ever calculable. The great wind-storms of the Marutis, with their driven clouds flying on before them, seemed to arrive at certain intervals in many regions including India, with the return of ice and snow elsewhere and mostly hated,—the periodic rains torrential or soft and fertilizing, the dews and the flowering earth itself:—these all followed one another at seeming regulated intervals;—it was Asha, order. Endeared among all else was the inextinguishable fire not only blazing in the ever self-consuming God of day, but in the very bowels of the earth, known too in the caloric of plants, flaming also in forked lightning in the heavens, snake-like in figure:—again it was the friend of man on hearth and altar. Asha became its very synonym, and so from this its sacredness, from regularity; it was indeed “God’s son.”<sup>3</sup> Then too the great ocean tides, to recall again the waters, with their ever measurable ebb and flood, could not have been altogether unknown to them, our early forebears, through hearsay, though living inland:—so too the spring freshets with swollen streams were ever to be looked for in their times. All was the unvarying circling forms of recurring certainty;—it was Asha, *rita*, “rhythm.” It reigned supreme in the sacrificial as in the genial.

What wonder then that they began to think that the thoughts of God were similar, supposing always that they had at that time any distinct idea whatsoever of a God,—that His law in some of its interior elements would harmonize with this rhythm “as to thought, as to word, and as to deed”;—that is to say, that it should be “perfect, converting the soul.”

All was symmetric in its movements; that is, all was Asha. It was “nature” always and everywhere, *natura* “to be born,” and to be born again, *natura*, not *futura* merely, but *natura*, to be rhythmically born in a reappearance never unreasoned in its process,—seed, stem, leaves, fruit, to seed, stem, leaves and fruit again,—stream, mist, cloud, rain, to stream, mist, cloud, rain again,—spring freshness, summer bloom, autumn harvest, winter frost with cheer

<sup>3</sup> A frequent expression as applied to it in the late Avesta.

or misery—to spring, bloom, harvest, frost again. It was law forever fulfilling itself,—Asha, Rita, Rhythm.

So in the old Veda in those early days, when man had however somewhat begun to form himself; Rita was so distinctly recognized that the very ceremonial service to the Heavenly Spirits followed its course in imitation. "Rite" appeared as Rita; that is to say, regularity in disciplined religious action in a form spectacular, presented ceaselessly and seldom varying, never abruptly, strictly and strenuously carried out by priests with closest care, consecrated for the ceremonial in sacrifice and praise.

But it was only in the stern Gātha, rough and sparse but glorious, that the Rita, Asha, became so exalted as the passionate honor of an Holy God in a sense supreme, a deity whose creature, the very foremost of all the other divine beings it was declared to be.<sup>4</sup> What an exaltation, let me again assert it, for simple but awful justice, the first pure principle of all sane conscienceness at least in man, and as we see, the first spiritual force in God. He is not an "infinite person," which could only be the language of inadvertence, for a "person cannot be infinite,"<sup>5</sup> but He is a *universal person* in whom we live and move; the Great Omnipotent, Omniscient, All-holy;—and He is *ashavan*, no liar.

#### VOHU MANAH.

Then Vohu Manah, the "Good Mind," was again a thing enthroned, and for that alone, if for nothing else, made eminent. This was again too a curious thought in a savage age in far off Persia to be placed in such position—for then it was that the gods of Greece wrangled like vulgar households and even our Jewish Yahveh was a "consuming fire."

Vohu Manah;—it was a deep yearning in the universe toward all the good, making what was best in their sentient longings real. It was more than a tame negation, a lifeless acquiescence; it was a warm breath of active sympathy, a passion pervading conscious nature everywhere like a befriending instinct, a slender thread of sweetness in all the intricacies of interior feeling that gives us hope through the maniac jars of this thing which we call life. Vohu Manah;—it was all that is holiest in emotions, fervor in pure breasts and brains; the quiet force in the love of man for his brother; the power in the noble love of man for woman so deep and so trans-

<sup>4</sup> Mithra, a noble God indeed like the most exalted of our Archangels, whose cult rivaled Christianity for a long time.

<sup>5</sup> Definition implies limit; see below.



forming, fierce too also at times, past holding ;—Vohu Manah—it is the father's solemn all-giving watchfulness which makes the name of "son" our deepest word.

Above all else it is the mother-love, that nerve of all controlling tenderness planted in every female soul over a little thing endowed for that very reason with a charm unspeakable,—to win and keep. And this Vohu Manah is again not left,—according to the Gātha,—a blind, unguided force, though beatific, in the world of sentient being ;—it is an attribute and emotion of a Supreme Person (morally supreme)—Vohu Manah,—it meant the deep love of Almighty God for all the righteous living under His holy eye ;—His creatures all the good were, and so was, in a still nearer sense, each one of them His child.

#### KHSHATHRA.

With Khshathra we come upon the deeply fundamental element of *Rule*.

Not men, nor angels can persist without it. Some forceful form of right is needed to control and maintain the Law and Love, shaping their every application.

Khshathra, government, administration !—without it chaos would ensue. With anarchy all property would turn worthless ; no man could earn his bread ; progress would be imperilled. Khshathra is command, severe indeed at times. Strength must emerge from commonplace while commonplace resists it. Conspiracy is unveiled by government—law put in force, Khshathra as "strength" meant discipline, combination with organization ;—without it rallying points would be difficult, and the dush-Khshathra would sweep the isolated hordes away. Fields could not be cultivated safe from Aeshma, "Raid fury of the bloody spear." And Khshathra rules in fact in every sentient being from the mammoths to the ant-tribes, while man is paramount because of it. And what a satisfaction have we here again, who believe the Gātha. Khshathra is not alone a universal law—though marvelous indeed as such he would be, or he is—part of the moving crystallization of the ever re-forming universe ; the forceful way in which things come and hold together, while like the flying blood they circulate. It is more : it is the *rule of our Sovereign God over us*. Where would be, indeed, the Truth—instinct of sincerity though it is ? where the Love, to lead us on, if there be no actual accordant *Power*. In Gātha it is *the authority of God*, as universal Monarch, exercising His might throughout His all-world and at every pulse.

We at times indeed lose courage, recalling our human administrations;—but if we believe that *God is King*, our hopes revive. According to the divine doctrine, and in the full implications, every needed office in every government, as well as every official, was and is in the very fact energized and vivified by Khshathra as the controlling force in the Life-spirit-Lord. He stands through Khshathra in every court of justice seeing that the wronged are protected. With His Khshathra He controls the voice of evidence, the judge's faith. He is present in the arm of execution, bars the prison gates, and strikes the oppressor dead. In the wide conflicts of politics He is above all things dominant, as Khshathra. In war He orders the compact mass through it;—straightens the flagging lines. It is His Khshathra that brings on *verethraghna*, victory, saving an imperiled land;—and in the result His authority supports the well-won, or the long established, throne. God is everywhere supreme according to the doctrine, always as implied<sup>6</sup>—through this authority; without His firm grasp all rules would be reversed.

#### ARAMAITI.

And then there was the Aramaiti, the Toil-Mind, the *ara*-thought of God; vivification of the holy, sacred forces just depicted, the self-movement throughout all better things; motion perpetual,—the eternal nerve indeed of holiness never for an instant left relaxed.

The Ara-mind of the Truth and Love and Power,—first stirring the ploughshare in the mould,—to *ar* in *aratrum*,<sup>7</sup>—making fair life possible, displacing murder, theft and arson.

It was in fact in the first keen idea of it, *holy work*,—and above all that of husbandry, first deed of virtue; the very earth itself from this took on the name in both Veda and Avesta. With it she also is Aramaiti, and as such sacred. Aramaiti should be to us the point of everything, the practical application of the other noble three. It was the central open secret of all the Gâthic existence; and it was vital. It was the life, virile thought of effort as against lazy theft. It found the tribes swept by the murderous raids of ferocious neighbors drunk with greed, their homes destroyed, their crops devastated, and their holy herds driven off, by Aeshma. Retaliation threatened to turn them too to murder; but the Gâthic voice arose, as ever fresh, calling for civilization with honest toil. The

<sup>6</sup> Here I treat once for all the mental forces implied everywhere;—seldom are these things actually expressed in Avesta as to their preciser point;—but everywhere *implied* in every line.

<sup>7</sup> This is my suggestion.

armed saint of the Gāthie battle was the *fshushyant* par eminence as against the *afshushyant*,—this distinctly.

He was “the cattle-breeding husbandman” toiling in the field with *ara*—thought, as against Aeshma. Where was the use of the Law, the Love, the Authority with hordes of starving families on land abandoned, derelict,—with savage bands rushing often headlong in, filling their barns with the plundered crops and raided flocks of murdered husbandmen?

How could the Law prevail without something in which the Law could have its exercise,—a nation. Aramaiti in one keen sense of it, and at its first idea was “industry,” as I insist—without it no householder could accumulate the very means of civil life; for it is the persistent, wise, practical and so accumulating citizen, who builds up his country, as we know. Blustering disturbers, even when half well-meaning, waste the bread. The first duty of a human creature is to earn its living; if it does not do that, it eats some other being’s food, makes others poorer, is the cause of famine.

Enough has been said to make my idea clear. It was energetic occupation and first of all for the one thing needful, bread, honest bread for the hungry, tilling the Holy Earth, herself the sacred Aramaiti.<sup>8</sup> This was the idea’s origin, as I think; and it was a worthy and noble one, becoming soon exalted even in that far-off day till it took its place upon the very brow of Deity among the Creator’s attributes. Here too it gave the keynote to the rest.

As it was the sacred instinct of mind-directed labor settling the destiny of man toward manhood, stopping his tendency to remain a beast of prey; so it became zeal, the “zeal of the Lord of hosts” in other cycles of idea—spontaneous instigation, instinctive planned activity. It was the main-spring of the never erring mechanism, driving on the mother-love with ever-living thrills of tenderness, moving on forever keen and fresh the father’s active thoughtfulness. It impelled the fire of mind in the expressed emotions of the singer and composer;—filled out the organizer’s schemes, kept up the ardor of the scholar keen and rapid and maintained it discovering, advancing. It was the quickness of the soldier, combining movements at a glance,—the genius of invention, building out the world’s capacities. It was the *ara-maiti*, self-toiling thought, stirring the hand and ear of creative passion everywhere. It was, in a word, our *Inspiration*.

In God, the divine instinct of activity, the essential force in spirit-motion; in man inspired obedience, in woman, piety, mild

<sup>8</sup> So too in Veda.



indeed, half unconscious, but still strenuous through all. No wonder that in pleasing memory God called it "daughter." It is the burning soul of the other three, the friend of Truth, the sister of Mercy, the handmaid of Command.

## HAURVATAT.

Haurvatat was the completeness of it all, again made here magnificent. She was the realization of the ideal, the wealth of health, and the health of wealth, in fact that very vision of perfection that should float as an ideal on the surface, or above every optimistic scheme to help it on and to make it actual. It was, in a word, *Fruition*. Who has not tasted somewhat of it at fleeting moments? It meant that justice should be more than a delusive subterfuge, hiding the sinister approach of theft forever creeping towards us. It meant that Love's longing should sometime touch their dearest goal, that just power should really reach dominion, that all nature's good instincts should succeed. It was with another's word, "to be satisfied." The name itself means All-ness, Haurvatat, the Vedic *sarvatat*, the great wall of full attainment enclosing the other Four. And goal and aim of all we hope for, we have again the satisfaction of it. *This Allness is again of God*: and if He be the Haurva, sarva, All, surely there is some expectation left to us that we may one day gain what our better instincts wish.

## AMERETATAT.

While Immortality, as ever lifted up in Attribute, should be the permanence. God has no beginning, and so we all shrink with Him from an ending. Death is to some of us, delusively, woe's ultimate. One can scarce refrain from citing the schooldays' rhymes so beautiful, though sad, of Halleck:

"Come to the bridal chamber, Death!  
 Come to the mother's, when she feels  
 For the first time her first-born's breath!  
 Come when the blessed seals  
 That close the pestilence are broke,  
 And crowded cities wail its stroke!  
 Come in consumption's ghastly form,  
 The earthquake shock, the ocean storm!  
 Come when the heart beats high and warm,  
 With banquet song, and dance, and wine!  
 And thou art terrible!—the tear,  
 The groan, the knell, the pall, the bier,  
 And all we know or dream or fear  
 Of agony are thine."

..

But the holy faith held out its banishment. The glory of the Truth, the deep satisfaction of the Love, the sense of safety from the Power, the Inspiration and the Fruition should not end in inanimation. The cup was not to be put to the lip only to excite desire, and to be dashed from it. There was to be an Ameretatat—death-absence. Like the Aditi of the Veda, Ahura was without beginning of days, and so consequently without end of years:—Eternity, Oh Eternity!—this, in another sense. As there was no beginning in God, so there was never a beginning to His works. He had put them forth from past eternity, and He will continue to do the like on to endless futurity, the same;—and so the life of the holy man should be deathless to a degree even here; but it should be also supernaturally immortal;—and this, when pointed, awoke everywhere the deepest hope, “bringing life and immortality to light.” Strange as it may seem to us, the other life came largely from Arya, from Iran from India. Veda with Avesta first pointed its significance. The Semites could at first see little reason in it. The great doctrine however is the vital force of Christianity, and the habitable world, so far as it is Christian, has lived on it for nineteen hundred years. Such are the immortals of the Gātha in their ideas expanded, well-called the “august,” as they are. This only, be it noticed, is their meaning in the first keen conception of them in the first department of the Gātha;—and they are as I need hardly linger to re-asseverate, the sublimest conceptions of their particular kind that the world had till then ever seen,<sup>9</sup> for here they were signally assembled for us,—and doubly re-consecrated, as the essence of all holiness in a pure God personified.

<sup>9</sup> In such remarks I refer, as I always try to make it plain, to well certified written lores.